

## Part V. HOLDING THE INITIATIVE

### Chapter I. Summary

#### 1. Holding the initiative

Holding the initiative is acting independently and aggressively with a fine planning sense, imposing our will, and gaining a position that dominates the combat situation.

Hence, holding the initiative is extremely important for reaching the objective of the operation (gaining the victory).

#### 2. Conditions for ensuring holding the initiative

##### a. Seizing the initiative

The first condition is to determine our will independently and establish a plan quickly before the enemy does his, in order to seize the initiative and conduct an active operation that holds the initiative.

For this reason, it is particularly important, by reading the mind of the enemy general and by foreseeing and discerning wisdom and careful preparation, to take the enemy by surprise and seize the initiative.

Also, holding the initiative is related to tactical mobility, and it is necessary, by quick tactical movement, excellent planning sense, and ingenuity, always to hold the initiative.

##### b. Gaining a position to control the combat situation

In order to gain a position to control the combat situation, it is particularly important to preempt key positions that control the combat situation. For this purpose, it is necessary to obtain reliable intelligence information before the enemy does, make thoroughgoing preparations, and apply superior combat power to key positions that control the combat situation.

#### 3. Holding the initiative in all tactical actions

a. Attack (attack on a position)--initiative is with us.

b. Defense--initially, the initiative is not with us but with the enemy.

c. Meeting engagement--there are various types of cases, the initiative being with us or with the enemy.

### Chapter II. The Meeting Engagement

#### 1. Condition of occurrence of the meeting engagement

As conditions for occurrence of the meeting engagement, the following are considered:

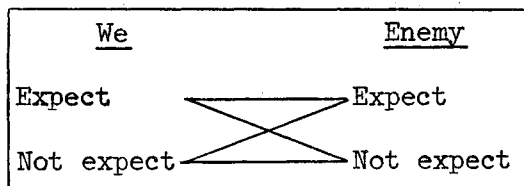


Fig. 67

There are four types of conditions, as in the figure at the left, the most desirable one being with us expecting and the enemy taken by surprise.  
(Retention of the initiative)

## 2. Securing the initiative in a meeting engagement

The essence of the meeting engagement is to gain the initiative by placing the enemy in a passive posture.

For this reason, items which should receive particular care are as follows:

- a. Preemption (securing) of key positions

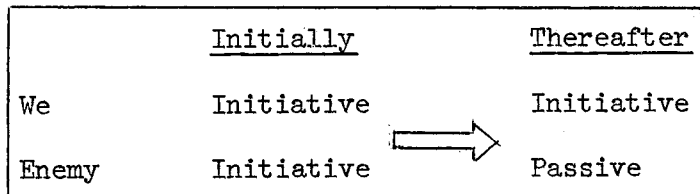


Fig. 68

Key positions that control the combat situation are occupied before the enemy, and the initiative on the battlefield is secured.

- b. Rapid deployment to a favorable posture

By using rapid tactical mobility, we deploy rapidly into a favorable posture before the enemy achieves it. At that time, it is necessary to make an all-out effort to mount an enveloping attack against the enemy.

- c. Organization of combat power

In the meeting engagement, in order to concentrate superior combat power at the decisive point and overcome the enemy, it is necessary quickly to coordinate and organize combat power, especially artillery firepower. It must be remembered that tactical movement unaccompanied by firepower is not effective.

## 3. Piecemeal commitment to battle or coordinated attack

The decision on piecemeal commitment to battle or a coordinated attack is made principally on the basis of which side secures key positions that control the combat situation.

In other words, in cases where the enemy secures the key positions, the coordinated attack is usual; and in cases where we control the key positions, in order to expand that success rapidly, piecemeal commitment to combat is usual.

#### 4. Essentials of deployment in an oblique meeting engagement

##### a. Types, and advantages and disadvantages

###### (1) Inner-flank deployment

Rapid deployment holds and increases the gains of the advance guard, and in favorable cases, has the advantage of being able to attack the enemy's flank. When the speed of deployment of both sides is the same, there necessarily also develops a frontal attack.

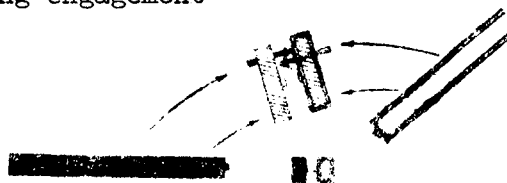


Fig. 69

###### (2) Outer-flank deployment

After deployment, the enemy can be enveloped but deployment requires time and, depending on the situation, deployment may be blocked. The advance guard easily becomes isolated and, in cases disadvantageous for combat, slips entirely into a passive posture.

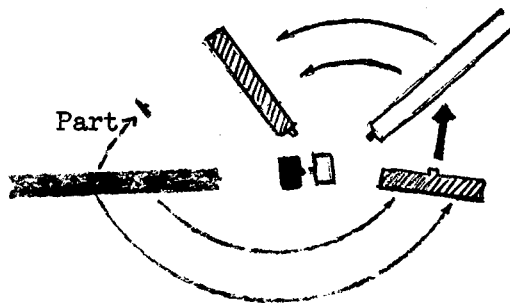


Fig. 70

##### b. Inner-flank or outer-flank deployment

In general, inner-flank deployment should be adopted. That is because development is completed rapidly and combat power can be applied with an advantageous posture. In this case, it is necessary that artillery be deployable and that tanks be advanced rapidly to the first line.

However, depending on terrain, position of adjacent units, etc., there are cases where adoption of exterior-flank deployment is advantageous.

#### Historical examples:

Battle of Yamazaki [1582](preemption, preempting Tennō-zan hill)

Battle near Ette and Virton (Longwy) in the Franco-German Battles of the Frontier [August 1914] in World War I (preemptive envelopment)

Engagement of the 12th Division near Da-yao [Ta-yao] in the Battle of Liaoyang [1904](preemption of a key position by an advance unit)

### Chapter III. Decisive Battle Outside the Prepared Position

#### 1. Decisive battle outside the prepared position

a. A decisive battle outside the prepared position means causing the enemy who has occupied a position and is waiting for us, to abandon his position and to join in a decisive battle in terrain outside the prepared position.

b. The aim of the decisive battle outside the prepared position is to cause the enemy's abandonment of his advantage of terrain and his advantage of time (preparation), to seek a reduction in his combat power, and to hope for superiority in relative combat power.

Hence, it must be more advantageous for the enemy to leave his position than to defend in his occupied position, or the situation must be made such that he cannot continue to occupy the position.

2. Area planned for the decisive engagement outside the prepared position

a. Rear of the enemy's position

Historical examples: The Sedan and Poland campaigns of the German Army.

b. In front of the enemy's position

Historical example: Battle of Xu-zhou [Hsü-chou, 1938]

3. Conditions for occurrence of the decisive battle outside the prepared position (decisive battle in the rear of the enemy's position)

a. Establishment of a posture that can force upon the enemy a decisive engagement outside his prepared position

At a distance far enough away so that the enemy cannot use his prepared position, we effect a turning movement at a location that poses a serious threat to the enemy's line of communications.

b. Being able to contain the enemy, that is, precluding his withdrawal to avoid a decisive engagement with us.

For this purpose, it is necessary to give consideration to such items as the following:

- (1) Rapid tactical movement to the area where the decisive engagement is expected
- (2) Concealment of our plans (actions)
- (3) It is necessary to give consideration to holding (deception, feint, dummy deployment, etc.) the enemy in his present position.

c. Safety, reliability, and concealment of movement to the area where the decisive engagement outside the prepared position is expected to occur.

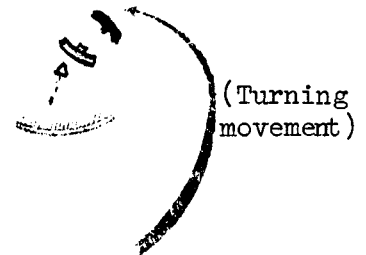


Fig. 71

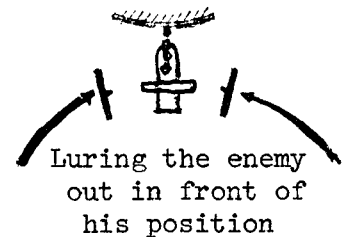


Fig. 72

d. Ability to apply our combat power completely during the decisive engagement.

In other words, maintaining the security of our line of communications.  
(Selection of direction, covering action, etc.)

4. Relationship between the unit occupying the position and reinforcing (rear) units

In cases where a decisive engagement outside the prepared position is expected, it is necessary to consider not only the confronted unit occupying the position, but also the relationship to the enemy's main force. In other words, it is necessary to consider whether or not the relationship with the enemy main force that reinforces or follows in the rear is strategically adequate. It must be noted that, at times, there are cases where the enemy constructs a trap.



Fig. 73

5. The turning movement

- a. The main goal of the turning movement is a decisive battle outside the prepared position

In other words, we avoid the enemy's main resistance to strike weak points deep in his flanks and rear, secure the initiative, and attempt to hold and destroy the enemy in the area we desire.

- b. The turning movement has the nature of preparation to destroy the enemy.

In other words, it is a movement that is not a deep envelopment. Hence, since the turning unit usually operates beyond supporting distance from other attacking units, it must avoid being defeated in detail by the enemy and retain sufficient combat power to destroy the enemy's main force.

- c. Action after the turning movement.

In regard to action after the turning movement, there is the case of joining combat directly and the case of simply seizing a concentration area and preparing for subsequent action.

- (1) Case of joining combat directly



- (2) Case of simply seizing a concentration area and preparing for subsequent action

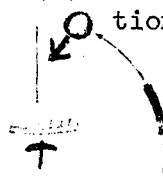


Fig. 74

d. Like the enveloping force being enveloped, it is necessary for the force executing a turning movement to be sufficiently careful not to be subjected to a turning movement, and to prepare countermeasures.

Historical examples:

The Inchon Landing in the Korean War [September 1950]

The turning movement of Ulm [1805]

Chapter IV. Interdiction of the Rear

1. Value of interdiction of the rear

a. If its rear is interdicted, usually the unit has its route of withdrawal interdicted, and it cannot get supplies and collapses. Also, it is easily isolated and annihilated.

b. Interdiction of its rear, for the enemy force, is a reason for withdrawal. In other words, it provides an inducement for recognizing defeat.

The cause of withdrawal in defeat	{	With a	{	Includes directly received materiel losses,
		small		And also a threat to the rear that arouses the instinct
	unit		for disengagement.	
	{	{		The more important the supply, the greater the threat to
			the rear;	
		With a		
		large		The connecting lines of leadership are cut, and replace-
		unit		ments are interrupted.

In other words, if it is a large unit, the situation of posture disadvantage, that is, of strategic disadvantage, rather than materiel losses, is the inducement for withdrawal.

[1] When there is complete encirclement, however, bravery comes to the fore.

This action also is produced merely by presenting a threat to the rear (route of withdrawal), and there occurs a strictly strategic effect.

[2] "Without fighting, to surrender to enemy forces" is because of the good of the soldiers (Sun-zi [Sun-tzü]).

In any case, the rear (route of withdrawal) ordinarily develops a weak point because of the disposition of the enemy, and this weak point itself naturally becomes a tactical objective.

2. What is the nature of the rear (route of withdrawal)?

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of terms related to this.

a. Line of communications

It means the group of transportation routes (roads, railroads, water routes, air routes, etc.) that connects an operating force with its base of operations (base for activity and subsistence that the operating force has in its rear) or logistic support area.

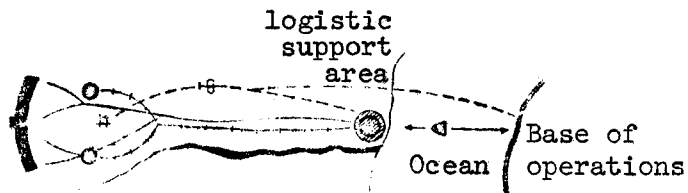


Fig. 75

In other words, the operating force is maintained and strengthened mainly by the lines of communications.

b. The withdrawal route also justifiably may be considered to be generally identical with the line of communications.

However, in military history, there also are many cases in which the actual withdrawal route, not only when forced by the enemy but also when freely adopted, is different in direction from the original line of communications.

c. In connection with the lines of communications, there are the following principles:

- (1) The force must never allow its lines of communications to be threatened.
- (2) Change of the lines of communications is extremely difficult if the force is large. Hence, it is effected only in cases where necessary for the security of the force.

Note: Interdiction of the rear, as noted above, includes interdiction of the route of withdrawal, interdiction of supply routes, splitting up and isolation of the rear, etc., but the text below speaks principally concerning the essentials of interdicting the route of withdrawal.

3. Essentials of interdicting the route of withdrawal

a. Among the essentials of interdicting the route of withdrawal are the method of directly attacking the withdrawal route with a part of the force (or the main force) (envelopment, turning movement, tactical air movement, etc.) and various methods such as attack by guerrillas, aircraft, etc., but here are discussed principally the items that require attention in determining the direction of attack.

b. Strategic and tactical considerations for determining the direction of attack

(1). Determining the direction of attack must be considered from both the strategic and the tactical viewpoint.

Strategically	{	Area that can interdict the enemy's withdrawal route
		Area that permits operating on exterior lines
		- - - → (Envelopment → interdiction of the withdrawal route)
Tactically	{	Enemy's weak point
		- - - - → (Rear also is one of the weak points)
		Area where application of our combat power is easy

In other words, considered from both the strategic and the tactical viewpoint, the main attack is directed toward the area that is most advantageous for the situation at that time.

#### (2) Case of the breakthrough

The enemy is split and pressed and destroyed away from his original line of communications.

Maginot Line breakthrough  
(10-21 May 1940)

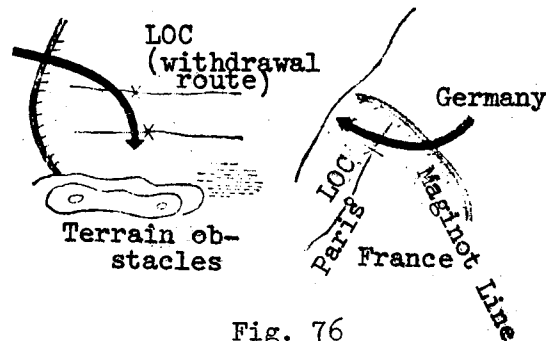


Fig. 76

#### (3) Envelopment (turning movement)

The wing to be enveloped is selected in the area passing through a vital part of the enemy, that is, his line of communications.

Rommel's envelopment (turning movement) of Gazala  
(27 May-13 June 1942)

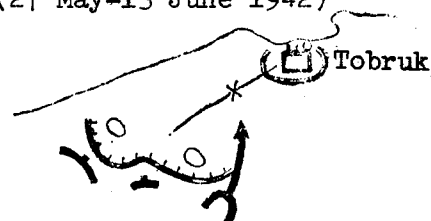


Fig. 77

#### (4) Pursuit

Besides envelopment and a turning movement, a breakthrough is effected and the enemy's route of withdrawal is quickly interdicted.

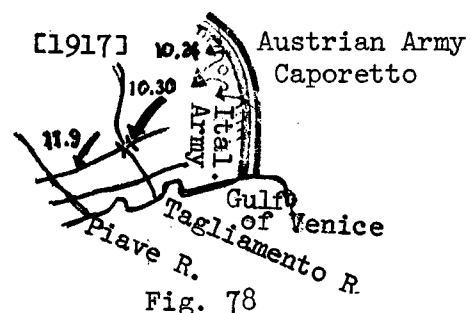


Fig. 78



c. Items that should be considered in determining the direction of attack

- (1) The withdrawal route is cut in an acute angle

With B, as the battle front pulls back, our line of operations is parallel to the route of withdrawal, and interception is not possible.

A, on the other hand, is close and interdicts easily.

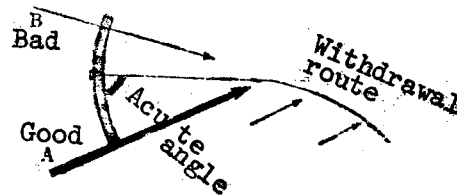
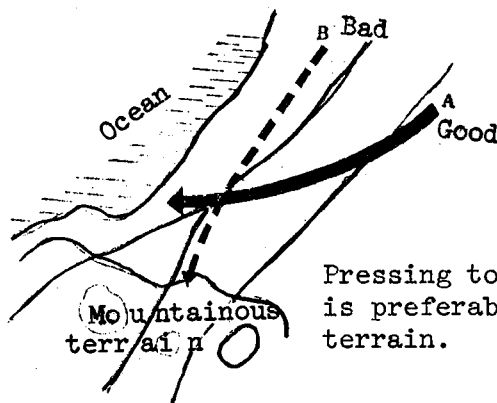


Fig. 79

- (2) Essentials of pressing [the enemy] toward a terrain obstacle



Pressing toward the ocean or a large river is preferable to pressing against mountainous terrain.

Fig. 80

- (3) Interdiction of air movement is necessary.

In modern warfare, air logistics is highly developed, and there are cases where, even when there is interdiction of surface supply lines, effectiveness is slight.

Air superiority has overwhelming power in interdicting lines of communications. Also, low-altitude operations or landings by enemy aircraft can be limited or made impossible by antiaircraft firepower. (Da Nang, Dien Bien Phu, etc.)

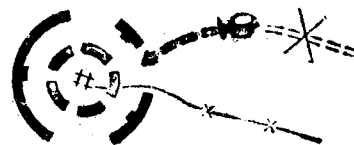


Fig. 81

- (4) Necessitating control of the sea

In land operations backing on the sea, if control of the sea and air is gained [by the enemy], the ground being defended must be abandoned without fighting. (Interdiction of withdrawal route)

In World War II, the campaigns of the Japanese Army on the Asiatic continent and on South Sea islands are good examples; and in the Russo-Japanese War, if Japan had been defeated in the Battle of Tsushima, a similar outcome probably would

have resulted.

(5) Other

If a large unit holds terrain in its rear, even if there is an envelopment, if the route of withdrawal is not completely interdicted, disengagement is easy to accomplish.

In the Russo-Japanese War, the Battle of Mukden is a good example of this.

If there seems to be a change in the ratio of relative combat power, the hither-to attacker must consolidate his posture or, at an appropriate time, change to the defensive; and the defender must create or seize a favorable tactical opportunity and, at a suitable time, change to the offensive and seek to destroy the enemy.

2. Cause of occurrence of a turning point in the course of a battle

a. Distance from the base of operations

For the attacker, maintenance and increase in combat power become difficult from extending the line of communications, and his combat power is caused to decrease. On the other hand, for the defender, the line of communications is shortened, increase in combat power becomes easier, and combat power increases.

Historical examples:

Napoleon's Moscow Campaign

Operations in the south-east Pacific area in World War II

German operations against the Soviet Union in World War II

Operations of the North Korean Army in the Korean War until the Pusan beachhead

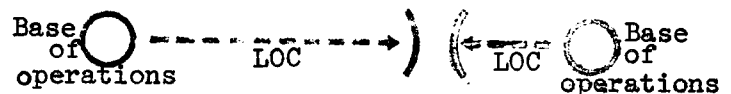


Fig. 82

Note: Such situations frequently occur in the conduct of a war or in operations of large units (strategic level). At the tactical level, this type of situation develops in the stage of exploitation, pursuit, etc.

b. Change in superiority in combat power

(1) Buildup of combat power

The buildup of combat power of the defender is superior to that of the attacker.

(a) Reinforcement

(b) Improvement in rear-area posture

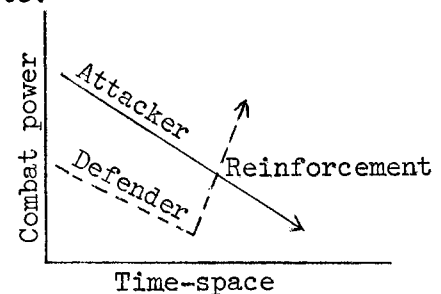


Fig. 83